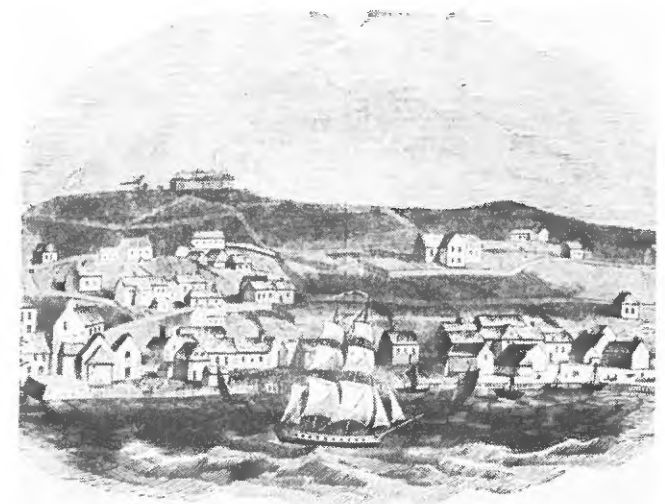


# The Cathedral Churchyard



*A View of the Town in 1844  
by Capt. E. P. Brenton.*

*The Cathedral of St. John The Baptist  
Diocese of Eastern Newfoundland  
and Labrador  
of the  
Anglican Church of Canada*

A study of the early burial registers leaves one with a strong feeling of sympathy and sadness on the picture of extreme poverty, disease and isolation unfolds. The very high proportion of deaths amongst infants and young children and the rarity of those reaching old age stands out.

For most burials the name is recorded but very few ages given. In the case of a young child a typical example would be "John, a little boy," but many young children are simply recorded as "a little child." The elderly are quite often referred to as "An old man" or "Old Mother \_\_\_\_\_." A military person would be referred to as "a soldier," or, if he belonged to the navy, as "a blue." A few examples, many of them typical, are as follows:

A little girl from the house under the New Garrison.  
A man brought from the Bay.  
Two persons buried by the Clark during Mr. Price's illness.  
A drowned little boy.  
The body of a person unknown.  
A man belonging to Mr. Gall.  
A child from Quidi Vidi.  
A soldier's little boy.  
A man that was lost in ye woods.  
A young woman.  
An old man from the Grove.  
Gilbert Marshall — a blue.  
John Shelton — a soldier.  
The old cooper, alias Fear Nothing.  
Thomas H\_\_\_\_\_ found dead by the Gibbet above Maggoty Cove.  
Old Mother Stowe.  
Lawrence H\_\_\_\_\_, the man that was hanged.  
A French child.  
A man unknown killed by rum.  
An old man found behind the chapel.  
During an absence the clerk buried ten persons.  
A little girl next door to the jail.  
A little infant from behind the church.  
Mr. Newman's splitter.  
A poor man, name unknown, who died in a back linney.  
A man out of Mr. Bulley's cook room.  
John M\_\_\_\_\_ at 48 (Coroners inquest died by Visitation from God).  
On June 8, 1892 Nancy Shanadithe at 23 - Southside (very probably the last of the aborigines).

*Let light perpetual shine upon them.*

And then there is the victim of the last duel to be fought in Newfoundland. On April 1, 1826 Ensign John Philpot aged 27, appears in the Register of Burials with notation "killed." His story is told by Lieut. Col. McCrea of the Royal Artillery in his famous book **Lost Amidst the Fogs**, published in 1869. The challenge to a duel was the result of an alleged cheating at a game of cards. The duel took place on Robinsons Hill between Philpot and Capt. Rudkin on March 30, 1826.

Admiral Sir Francis Pickmore, first resident Governor of Newfoundland, died on February 24, 1818, during a winter of much snow and severe frost. His body was escorted to the wooden church where it remained in a temporary vault for three weeks during which time nearly 350 local men and sailors were engaged in cutting a channel through the ice to let **HMS Fly** reach open water and convey the late Governor's body to England for burial.



## The Cathedral Churchyard, or to call it by its original title The Burying Ground.

To the south of the cathedral lies the oldest existing cemetery in St. John's. Being a government undertaking in its early days it was originally known as The Burying Ground. It was the last resting place for people of all religious persuasions but with the Church of England priest officiating at the committal according to the rites of the Church of England, he being the representative of the Established Church in the town.

We do not know for sure when the cemetery came into use but records of burials exist dating back to 1752, except for a period of about two years when the Rev. Edward Langman, rector at the time, entered the following memo in the Register of Deaths:- "The two years of the Register between November 4, 1760 as above and the 27th. June 1762 were lost when the French took this place, as I lay sick in a dangerous Flux all the time the French were here and my papers were all then lost." Mr. Langman suffered greatly at the hands of the French but because of health was allowed to remain in his home and not be driven as prisoner to Placentia as were the non Roman Catholics.



Not only was his house plundered and his church taken over by the French priests but his wife succumbed to the hardships and was buried on August 3rd. and only a few weeks later on September 30th., his infant daughter.

Another probable date for the opening of the cemetery would be about 1720 when a new church was built in the vicinity of the southeast corner of the cemetery allowing the destruction of an earlier church near Ordnance Street. This church had fallen into decay and was replaced by another in 1757, erected near the foot of Church Hill with its eastern end near the Barnes Memorial which stands on the mound in the southwest corner of the cemetery. By 1800 another church farther up Church Hill was erected to replace the 1757 church which had fallen into disrepair. The eastern end of this church reached into the churchyard close to the southwest corner of the nave of the present cathedral.

A portion of a headstone discovered during the construction of an external boiler-room in 1958 close to the foundation of the cathedral and some seventeen feet below the surface is characteristic of stones designed in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. It is now in the cathedral museum. Only the "17" portion of the year is intact, however there is no Mary Stow entered in the records since 1752 and must therefore be of an earlier date.

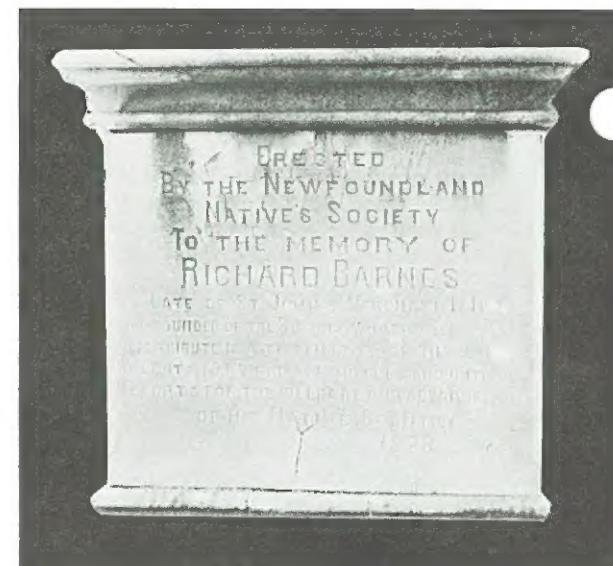
On December 13, 1752 the first clergyman to be buried in the cemetery was the Rev. William Fotheringham who died in St. John's whilst on his way to Trinity to take up his duties in Trinity Bay.

Although the free exercise of all modes of religious worship was granted by His Majesty George III in 1774, it was not until 1811 that Roman Catholics and Methodists were granted land for their own cemeteries. The Roman Catholics were granted land fronting on Longs Hill and Queens Road immediately in front of where the Kirk now stands. The Methodists were granted land immediately adjacent to the west of the present Gower Street Church. The Church of England retained rights to the Old Burying Ground. These three cemeteries continued to serve the needs of the various denominations until 1849 when a Government decree banning all burials within the limits of the town was proclaimed. The last burial in the churchyard was that of one James Cook on June 22, 1849.

It is said that the cemetery has been filled over three times. From 1752 up to the time of its closing in 1849 no less than 5,000 burials are recorded. Today only four headstones remain standing in their original position. These were erected between 1838 and 1848. Two are of considerable historical importance, namely Hon. William Carson, M.D. and Richard Barnes. Hon. William Carson, who, as his headstone records, strove for the welfare of Newfoundland for over thirty-five years. He was one of the leaders in obtaining Representative Government for Newfoundland in 1832. In 1979 a memorial tablet commemorating Dr. Carson's service to Newfoundland was affixed to the southeast corner of the cemetery wall facing the corner of Duckworth Street and Cathedral Street by the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada. The other burial of historical note was that of Richard Barnes, a local merchant who founded the Natives Society, whose mission was to promote the welfare of the local citizens of St. John's. His headstone was erected in 1878 by the Society some 28 years after his death. Barnes sat in the House as a member for Trinity 1842-46 and it was he who



The stone marking the grave of The Rev. F. H. Carrington, Rector and Chaplain to the Garrison; buried with full military honours on Oct. 10th., 1839.



introduced the first Bill for the Encouragement of Education in Newfoundland. Of the remaining two headstones still standing one is in memory of a little girl, Catherine Sarah Archibald who died on March 26, 1849, aged nine and a half, and the earliest dated stone is in memory of Jane Wood, who died on January 27, 1838.

There are several other headstones surviving but their original location is uncertain. One is to the memory of the Rev. Frederick Hamilton Carrington, Rector of St. John's Church for 21 years, who died on October 7, 1839, aged 59 years. There is also a bronze memorial tablet commemorating Rev. Carrington on one of the pillars in the cathedral.

Other names stand out in Newfoundland History but their graves are unmarked with only the registers attesting to their burial.

On June 20, 1874 the Rev. Edward Langman, after a ministry of nearly forty years, was buried here. Mr. Langman was the first to combine the office of magistrate with that of his clerical calling. His Parish included the whole of the Avalon Peninsula and his visitations took him to Placentia, Renew, Fermeuse and Ferryland. In spite of many difficulties including those already referred to, Mr. Langman persevered in the discharge of his duties until his death. He is one of the most important figures in the early history of the Anglican Church in Newfoundland.

Sir James Pearl, a retired Naval Officer settled in the west end of St. John's and established a farm on the site of the present Federal Government Agricultural Research station. The area and town in the vicinity, Mount Pearl, is named after him. He died on January 13, 1840.